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AUTHOR Chen, Guo-Ming
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ABSTRACT

Because an understanding of the cultural value orientation leads to more effective communication with people from different cultures, this paper examines how the difference of cultural value orientations affects the communication process. The paper explores the dissimilarities of value orientations between Chinese and American families from the perspective of communication. The paper focuses on five sets of cultural value orientations of the family: relational orientations, positional role behavior, authority, kinship, and ancestor worship. Chinese and American families are compared and contrasted for each set. The paper concludes that: (1) there is a close relationship between human language and culture; (2) proverbs are useful to illustrate the cultural value orientations within the Chinese family system; (3) present intercultural communication research pays too much attention to the communication process and ignores the concept of culture itself; (4) when studying cultural value orientations, a person should understand several inherent limitations; and (5) cultural value orientations change over time. (Eight figures are included, and 12 references are appended.) (MS)

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A Comparative Study of Value Orientations of Chinese and American Families: A Communication View

By

Guo-Ming Chen, Ph.D.
Department of Speech Communication
University of Rhode Island
Kingston, RI 02881
(401) 792-2551

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ABSTRACT

The important role cultural values play in human communication has been emphasized since the field of intercultural communication was established in 1960s. The purpose of this paper was to examine the disimilarities of value orientations between Chinese and American families, and further investigate how these differences affect communication process. Five categories of value orientations were used in this paper include relational orientations, positional role behaviors, authority, kinship, and ancestor worship. Limitation, implications and directions for future research were also discussed.

A Comparative Study of Value Orientations of Chinese and American Families: A Communication View

Since 1930s and 1940s, scholars from anthropology, sociology, linguistics, and political science have begun to study cross-cultural relations among different countries. Theoretically, the study of cross-cultural relations was separated into two distinct schools of thought: cultural dialogists and culture critics (Asante, Newmark & Blake, 1974). The cultural dialogue school proclaims that people could and should communicate with each other; therefore, humanism and internationalism become the main tenets of this school, which argues that cross-cultural studies can organize human society along mutually satisfying lines, and promote world understanding. The school of cultural critics differs in the way they seek to perfect the communication process across cultures by eliminating barriers through steps of classification, analysis, and application. Both schools of thought have contributed significant research in cross-cultuaral studies.

One variable that received attention from both schools is the cultural value orientation, because an understanding of the cultural value orientation is one of the most important ways to communicate effectively with people from different cultures. Unfortunately, there are still very few studies dealing with the comparison of cultural value orientations between or among different countries. Research need to further examine how the difference of cultural value orientations affect the communication

process. It is the purpose of this paper to deal with the cultural value orientations between Chinese and American families from the perspective of communication.

The cultural value orientations are considered to be the possible limited solutions for the universal problems faced by all societies (Kluckhohn, 1961). It is assumed that every society has its own unique way to solve the societal problem. Originally, Kluckhohn (1961) first proposed five sets of cultural value orientation. Then, Condon and Yousef (1975) added an additional twenty, for a total of twenty five sets. Condon and Yousef further classified the twenty five sets of cutural value orientation into six categories which include: self, the family, society, human nature, nature, and the supernatural. The paper focuses on the family with three sets of cultural value orientations and the addition of kinship and ancestor worship within the set of value orientation. The five sets of cultural value orientation of the family that are examined in this paper are relational orientations, positional role behavior, authority, kinship and ancestor worship.

Relational Orientations

According to Kluckhohn (1961), relational orientations in a family can be classified into three dimensions: the individualistic orientation, the collateral orientation, and the lineal orientation. Using this distinction, the Chinese family is characterized by a lineal orientation in which there exists a highly developed historical consciousness. The Chinese inherently

believe that they should look after their parents and elder persons. They not only take care of their ancestors' graves, but also obey wishes of deceased parents. In addition, there is a very close association with extended families. All these are expected to continue from one generation to the next.

In comparison, the American family is characterized by an individualistic orientation. There is a sharp contrast between American and Chinese families in that the obligations required by the Chinese family are not demanded by the American family. In the American family older and younger members may share the same values and feel some responsibility to help their parents, but very often the care of the elderly is entrusted to impersonal institutions although they may provide financial help in the form of insurance or retirement plans.

It is obvious that the relational orientations in China are tighter and more extended than in America. There are several basic relationship ties that exist in the Chinese family such as family to ancestors, family to kin, husband to wife, parents to children, and children to children. In the American family only two close relationship ties can be found: husband to wife and parents to children. For the convenience of comparison, only the relationships between husband and wife and parents and children will be discussed.

Husband and Wife

"Follow the man you marry, be he a fool or a crook." This saying shows the typical relationship between a husband and wife

in the Chinese family. The wife's status is subordinate to her husband. The household is the wife's domain, but she actually manages the family business only when her husband is weak and/or incapable.

Chinese believe that there should be no public observable expression of affection between a husband and wife. In public they are to appear indifferent toward each other, like the saying: "In bed, husband and wife, out of bed, guests." Ideally, the most important duty for the wife is to bear children for the family in order to extend the generations. Practically, the wife's main duties are to take care of her husband's parents and her husband. The wife is expected to submit to her husband like she submits to her parents-in-law and her own father. The husband may freely desert his wife, but the wife may not do the same. Moreover, when the husband's parents die, he is expected to show deep sorrow. However, when his wife dies, the husband is only expected to show some grief. The husband is responsible for the wife's support in Chinese family system.

The husband-wife relationship in the American family is much more intricate than in the Chinese family. The equivalent role of a wife often produces conflict between a husband and a wife. Since a wife is not subordinate to her husband, separation or divorce may become a popular way to end the relationship. Basically, the husband is still the primary economic support in the American family. However, the couple have differentiated but strongly interlocking roles.

According to Cavan (1963), the relationship can be illustrated by wife's roles in the family. First, in the wife-and-mother role, this role ensures the wife's privileges of economic security, respect of her husband and children, and a certain amount of domestic authority.

Second, the role of companion gives the wife privileges such as sharing the pleasures of her husband, receiving a romantic emotional response, and having leisure for educational and social activities.

Lastly, the partner role encourages and allows the wife to work and to be economically independent. The wife has equal authority with the husband in finances and in equal social and moral liberty.

Under these circumstances, harmony becomes the most essential element in maintaining the relationship between husband and wife. Yet there are external factors that can cause conflict between them, such as when the husband dies or has a prolonged illness, or when he is out of work.

Parents and Children

The basic difference in the relationship between parents and children in Chinese and American families is that Chinese ask what children should do for their parents and Americans ask what parents should do for their children (Hsu, 1981).

Traditionally, in China, parents have the freedom to decide their children's future. For instance, infanticide was seldom punished by the law. The communication was absolutely limited to

one direction -- from parents to children. The feedback from children was only one way, i.e., to fulfill what the parents wished regardless whether it was reasonable or not. The children (especially the son) not only had to follow sayings like "Parents are always right" and "Filial piety is the most important of all virtues," but they also had to satisfy their parents' wishes and to protect their parents' safety at all times and in all circumstances.

One of the tales from Chinese literature called "The Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Piety" illustrates this characteristic:

> A poor man by the name of Kuo and his wife were confronted with a serious problem. His aged mother was sick in bed. She needed both medicine and nourishment which Kuo could ill afford. After consultation between themselves, Kuo and his wife decided that the only way out was to get rid of their three-year-old only son. For Kuo and his wife said to each other, "We have only one mother, but we can always get another child." Thereupon the two went out to the field to dig a pit for the purpose of burying their child alive. but shortly after the man had started to dig, he suddenly struck gold. It transpired that the gods were move by the spirit of their filial piety, and this was their reward. Both the child and the mother were amply provided for and the family thrived happily ever after. (translated by Hsu, 1981, pp. 81).

In contrast to Chinese, American parents have little right to decide their children's destiny. Usually, American parents are concerned very much with the welfare of their children. They not only wish to help their children according to their experience, but they also try to find out what their children really want. The communciation between parents and children is more open and two ways. They exchange opinions with each other like friends.

To obey what parents say is not mandatory for children. This point will be elaborated on further in the authority orientation.

Positional Role Behavior

Condon and Yousef (1975) categorized the positional role behavior within the family into three patterns: open, general, and specific. There is no role behavior appropriate to age and sex for the open orientation, but, for specific orientation, it is chiefly determined by sex and relative age. The general orientation shows a balance neither completely fixed nor completely free. Using these classifications, Chinese fit in the specific orientation, and Americans fit in the open orientation.

The positional role behavior within Chinese family is decided by three elements which are listed in order of priority: generation, age, and sex. This role means that the older generation, elders and males are superior. To illustrate this point, Baker (1979, p.16) did a diagrammatic representation in which the family consists of a father, mother, three married sons, and their unmarried children. This diagram is shown in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 About Here

Number 1 is the father. He receives obedience from all other members of the family because he is superior in generation, age, and sex. Number 2 is the mother who demands obedience from all members except the father because she is superior in generation and age. The superiority between father and mother is decided

purely by the difference in sex.

The relationships between numbers 3 and 4, 5 and 6, 7 and 8 are the same as 1 and 2. If 1 and 2 are deceased, then 3 and 4 will become 1 and 2 in their own lines.

Number 3 is the eldest son who demands obedience from 4 to 14. When 1 and 2 get too old or decease, he becomes the head of the family.

Number 4 is the eldest son's wife. Her role is more complicated and controversial in the Chinese family system. She owns obedience from 5 to 14 but, at the same time, she must show obedience to her husband and his parents. She is a wife, mother, and daughter-in-law (the same for 6 and 8). Usually, in the Chinese family system the relationship between 4 and 2 is difficult (the same between 6, 8 and 2). The conflict always derives from 3 (and 5 and 7), since 3 is the son of 2, but is the husband of 4. Moreover, conflict will most often occur among 4, 6 and 8 because of the age hierarchy among their husbands which requires them to obey 3.

The superiority of role behavior from 9 to 14 depends on the age hierarchy. They are affectively attached together. It is very common that the elder sister takes care of her little sisters and brothers.

Number 10 and 11 are thought to be only temporarily living with the family because eventually they will marry outside of it. The youngest (grand) son occupied a very special role in the family. He is like a pearl in the family, especially to his

grandparents and parents. Sometimes this phenomenon can break the sex and age hierarchies among siblings.

In this positional structure, conflict may be found involving number 7. It is obvious that 7 owes obedience to 1 and 2 to 3 and 5 on generation and age grounds, but he probably thinks that he is superior to 4 and 6 on sex grounds, especially when 4 and 6 are younger than he.

The positional role structure of the American family is much simpler than the Chinese. Since most of the families are small ones, the structure may look like Figure 2. An American family has no clear generation, age or sex hierarchy. Although the husband may be the economic head of the family, there is no particular expected role significance being older or younger or being male or female. So number 1 can be a husband of 2, and a father of 3 and 4, but he can act as a friend of 2, 3 and 4 at the same time. The same is true for 2, who can be a wife, mother, and friend. The positions of 3 and 4 are equal to each other and can be equal to 1 and 2 in a behavioral aspect. This structure is broken when 3 and 4 are married to others. The positional role of 3 is different from the Chinese because he has no obligation to live with or to protect 1 and 2.

Insert Figure 2 About Here

Authority

From the discussion of relational orientations and positional

role behavior, one can easily distinguish the authority patterns that exist between Chinese and American families. Usually, authority orientation in the family was divided into three patterns (Condon & Yousef, 1975). The first is the democratic oriented family, where the authority figure always acts according to the opinions and wishes of all members. The second is an authority-centered pattern, where authority is dependent on some abstract or general form, such as religious beliefs or family name. The third is an authoritarian pattern, where the father usually makes important decisions and others owe obedience to him.

Authoritarian orientation is strongly reflected in the Chinese family system. Sex hierarchy makes the maternal system subordinate to the paternal line. The main characteristics of this orientation are that wife is obliged to serve, obey, and respect her husband, and children are obliged to owe their filial duty to their father. This orientation also emphasizes the relationship between father and son. However, it may cause conflict in the later years of the father (Baker, 1979). For example, when the father is getting older he must face the fact that his sons will become dominant in physical activity and be less willing to accept his command. This aging may lead the mature sons to demand the immediate division of the family estate from the authoritarian father. If this happens, the father's authority will be suspended and the structure of positional role discussed above will be broken into four separate conjugal

families (see Figure 3).

Insert Figure 3 About Here

In this case, 1 and 2 usually live with 3, the eldest son. However, the lip service for 1 and 2 was probably provided by 5 and 7 equally. If 1 dies before his authority is suspended, the family could fall into a chaotic situation such as Figure 4 represents. The figure shows that the authority of the first generation has disappeared, but three conjugal family units still live under the same roof. Conflicts may derive from the imbalance of authority among 3, 5 and 7.

Insert Figure 4 About Here

The American family is obviously more democratic and child-centered. In this orientation authority is balanced between paternal and maternal lines. It signifies approximate similarity between the husband and wife in status, decision-making and authority. It also allows children to influence their parents' behaviors. This balance can be shown by the fact that the children sometimes do more of the speaking. For example, according to Mead (1948), dinner table conversations typically reflect the characteristics of children's talk within American families: exaggeration, loud voices and discontinuity. Therefore, it is not a question of who has the right to exercise authority in

the family, but who know how to deal with problems in the family. In other words, in American family, the authority resides in reason, rationality, technical know-how, and the best expertise available (Schneider, 1978).

Kinship

In East and West, the early culture was characteristically represented by small, isolated, close-knit societies in which face-to-face relations were prevalent and kinship was a dominant factor (Spuhler, personal communication). Kinship was the first system developed outside the family. It is the extension of a family, and both are almost inseparable, but the development of a kinship system becomes very different among countries in modern times. China and America may be the best contrast examples. The Chinese still tightly keep their traditional family system. Their kinship system can be continually traced back for over two thousand years. In America, the technological and political developments expanded its territory and population, making society depersonalized and individualized. These developments made kinship system and the behavior of kinsmen lose their significance. This characteristic has been reflected in the previous section of relational orientation.

Basically, Chinese kinship system can be divided into four groups:

1. One's own family (pen-chia) -- which includes all relatives with the same surname as ego such as father, mother, brother, unmarried sisters, husband, wife, sons, unmarried

daughters, father's brothers with their wives, sons, and unmarried daughter.

2. Relative outside the household (wai-chin) -- which includes all pen-chia relatives together with all relatives they may acquire by their marriage such as ego's married sisters and daughters together with their husbands and their children and the other "in-laws" generated by the marriage.

3. Wife's relatives (nei-chi) -- which includes ego's wife's relatives that would be her pen-chia relatives had she not married. When a woman marries, this group of relatives becomes her chin-chi, and her husband's pen-chia relatives are the only pen-chia relatives she has thereafter.

4. Relatives of different surname (chin-chi) -- which includes any relatives excluding 1, 2 and 3. One has the same chin-chi as one's father and mother. When a woman marries, all relatives who are 1 and 2 before marriage become her chin-chi. When a man marries, all his wife's chin-chi, other than his nei-chin, become his own chin-chi as well.

This kinship structure shows a complex but orderly communication system. It not only includes the family system, but also extends to the whole social system in China. Within this system, rank or social precedence is always present in interpersonal relationships. In order to show the basic kinship system of the Chinese family, a diagram is presented as Figure 5.

Insert Figure 5 About Here

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1. Fu -- father
2. Mu -- mother
3. Bo -- father's older brother
4. Shu -- father's younger brother
5. Chiu -- mother's older and younger brothers
6. Ku -- father's older and younger sisters
7. Yi -- mother's older and younger sisters
8. Tsu-Fu -- father's father
9. Wai-Tsu-Fu -- mother's father
10. Tsu-Mu -- father's mother
11. Wai-Tsu-Mu -- mother's mother
12. Ko -- ego's older brother
13. Di -- ego's younger brother
14. Chieh -- ego's older sister
15. Mei -- ego's younger sister
16. Bo-Ko -- son of father's older brother (older than ego)
17. Shu-Ko -- son of father's younger brother (older than ego)
18. Bo-Di -- son of father's older brother (younger than ego)
19. Shu-Di -- son of father's younger brother (younger than ego)
20. Bo-Chieh -- daughter of father's older brother (older than ego)
21. Shu-Chieh -- daughter of father's younger brothr (older than ego)
22. Bo-Mei -- daughter of father's older brother (younger than

ego)

23. Shu-Mei -- daughter of father's younger brother (younger than ego)
24. Biao-Ko -- son of father's sister and son of mother's brother and sister (older than ego)
25. Biao-Di -- son of father's sister and son of mother's brother and sister (younger than ego)
26. Biao-Chieh -- daughter of father's sister and daughter of mother's brother and sister (older than ego)
27. Biao-Mei -- daughter of father's sister and daughter of mother's brother and sister (younger than ego)
28. Erh-Tzu -- ego's son
29. Nu-Erh -- ego's daughter
30. Chih-Erh -- sons of older and younger brothers
31. Seng-Erh -- sons of older and younger sisters
32. Chih-Nu -- daughters of older and younger brothers
33. Sheng-Nu -- daughters of older and younger sisters

This diagram reveals the relationships, the positional roles of behavior, and the authority orientations within the Chinese family system. Basically, this structure of kinship system exists in the American family system. However, from the standpoint of the degree of close relationships, the American family system tends to be much simpler. In the family, husband and wife are supposed to comprise a single unit, to share and share alike. They are jointly responsible for their family and its fate. The family lives together apartfrom other kinsmen. The

kinship ties are only probably apparent between the parents and their unmarried children. Compared to China, it is obvious that American family kinship is functionally unimportant. This kinship system with nuclear structure is apparently very functional and suited to the American occupational system and urban living (Schneider, 1968).

Except for the differences between Chinese and American families mentioned above, problems in communication process also exist in language orientation for the structure of the kinship system. Because the American kinship system only emphasizes the relationship between parents and children, and the authority orientation within the family is more equal, the terms used to represent role positions become different from the Chinese. This difference often confuses both Chinese and Americans when they first encounter. The first problem is illustrated in Figure 6.

Insert Figure 6 About Here

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1. Da-Ko -- the oldest brother
2. Erh-Ko -- the second older brother
3. Da-Chieh -- the oldest sister
4. Erh-Chieh -- the second older sister
5. Da-Di -- the first younger brother
6. Erh-Di -- the second younger brother
7. Da-Mei -- the first younger sister
8. Erh-Mei -- the second younger sister

The orientation of the age hierarchy is distinctly shown in this figure. In the American family, it is found that only terms such as "older" and "younger" are used to show the order of brothers and sisters. In the Chinese family, however, distinct numbers are used to show the age order and authority among them.

The second problem is illustrated in Figure 7.

Insert Figure 7 About Here

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1. Chih-Erh -- brother's son
2. Chih-Nu -- brother's daughter
3. Shẹng-Erh -- sister's son
4. Sheng-Nu -- sister's daughter

The sex distinction is clear in this figure. There are different terms used to show the roles of brother's and sister's sons and daughters in the Chinese family. In the American family, the term "nephew" is used to include the sons of brothers and sisters, and "niece" to include the daughters of brothers and sisters.

The third problem is illustrated in Figure 8.

Insert Figure 8 About Here

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1. Bo -- father's older brother
2. Shu -- father's younger brother
3. Ku -- father's older and younger sisters

4. Chiu -- mother's older and younger brothers

5. Yi -- mother's older and younger sisters

This figure indicates that the term "uncle" used in America includes father's and mother's brothers, and "aunt" includes father's and mother's sisters. As for sons and daughters of father's and mother's brothers and sisters, there are no special terms to represent them. In the Chinese family, again, each position is assigned a distinct name.

Ancestor Worship

Ancestor worship probably illustrates one of the most different value orientations between Chinese and American families. Within the Chinese family, ancestor worship is one of the main parts of family life. To Americans, ancestor worship occupies no such position in the family system. In order to compare the function of ancestors in Chinese and American families, ancestor worship should include ancestor memorialism. Although Americans do not worship their ancestors, the memory of their ancestors still exists. However, the internal meaning of ancestor worship and ancestor memorialism are very different in these two countries. For Chinese,

> Ancestor worship is literally the universal religion of China. More, it is the central link between the Chinese world of men and their world of the spirits. Ancestor worship not only specifically embodies all the general characteristics of the Chinese approach to the supernatural, but, to the Chinese, it is itself positive proof and reinforcement of all their other religious belief. Ancestor worship is an active ingredient in every aspect of Chinese society, from the family to the government, from local business to the national economy. (Hsu, 1981, pp. 248)

In the Chinese family, ancestor worship implies that the

physical body of an ancestor died but that his soul continues to live and watche over the life of his descendants with supernatural power. It is like the saying "You may hide a thing from a man; from the spirits you cannot hide it." In China, the function of ancestor worship is to reinforce the unity of the family and enhance the Generation-Age-Sex scheme of authority in the family (Baker, 1979).

Usually, there are two places where Chinese worship their ancestors. One is at home, the other is at the graveyard. Most Chinese families have a shrine in their house that is used for worshipping their ancestors. Inside the shrine, the ancestral tablets are placed in such a position that they can overlook much of the life that goes on there. Every day incense and tea are offered to the ancestors. On the first and fifteenth days of Chinese lunar month, in addition to incense and tea, foods, fruits and paper money are offered. The lunar New Year's Day is the most active time for worshipping ancestors with more elaborate offerings. Ancestors are remembered again on the anniversaries of their birth and death. They also share in important events of the family such as weddings or other festivals. Women who do not work outside the home normally undertake the daily worship. However, on important occasions, such as on New Year's Day and on an ancestor's birthday, the men, especially the male head of the family, are expected to fulfill the job (Baker, 1979).

The ancestor's grave, which resembles a house, is always built as elaborately as possible. Normally ancestors are

worshipped one or two times per year at the graveyard. The principal one is the Chin Ming festival (April 5 of the Chinese lunar month). This day is called the "grave-sweeping festival." On that day, the grave site must be cleaned, swept and seeded, and repaired by the living offsprings, and the ancestors are worshipped by the whole family. Some families may repeat the ceremony on Tsuon Yiang festival (September 9 of the Chinese lunar month).

There is no similar shrine in American homes. From the structure of the family system previously discussed, it is not difficult to understand why ancestor worship does not exist in American families. Besides, the the difference in religious doctrine is another principal reason. Christianity rejects ancestor worship, especially idol worship like Chinese tablets in the shrine, from the outset and considers the church the only place to worship God. In addition, for Americans, in the graveyard, one cross stands for one dead person buried. Although flowers are offered to the grave at certain times of the year, the relationship with ancestors tends to be transitory. In spite of this kind of orientation to ancestors, it is still found that the feeling of memory of ancestors exists in American people in two ways. First, Americans keep paintings, pictures, antiques and other things from ancestors at home. The host often shows these objects to guests and explains where and whom the objects came from. Second, Americans inherit their ancestor's name. In addition to memorializing their ancestors in these ways, they are

also used to glorify them.

The difference in attitude regarding one's ancestors might cause serious communication problems among people. This difference can be seen throughout the nineteenth century when Christian missionaries tried to convert Chinese people by first requesting that they give up the ceremony of ancestor worship in China.

Conclusion

The important role cultural values play in human communication has been emphasized both in research and pedagogy of intercultural communication since 1960s. Two general points have been recognized in the existing research on the relationship of cultural values and communication (Sitaram & Haapanen, 1979). First, communication is considered a carrier of cultural values in which cultural values are communicated through a symbolic system. Second, communication behaviors are shaped by one's cultural value system. In other words, how people communicate is influenced by the cultural values they hold. This obviously shows that difference in cultural values might produce communication gaps, and could even cause a failure of communication among people from different cultures.

This paper compared the cultural value orientations between Chinese and American families. In addition to examining how the difference of cultural value orientations affects communication process, several implications can be generated from this paper.

First, the paper revealed the close relationship between

human language and culture. Keesing (1975) argued that human language is like a mirror which reflects the speaker's cultural background. In other words, a language always presupposes and is influenced by cultural assumptions about the things of a community. Terms used to by Chinese representing the different positions in the kinship system distinctly reflect the dissimilities of Chinese and American cultures. Based on this point, it is clear that in order to communicate effectively across cultures, one has to possess both linguistic and cultural knowledge.

Second, in this paper different proverbs were quoted to illustrate the cultural value orientations within the Chinese family system. According to Smith (1965), a proverb is "the fruit of the longest experience expressed in the fewest word" (p. 11). Proverbs can illustrate the grammatical law of language that are easy to catch and hard to forget. More important, proverbs exhibit the thought of a culture. Using proverbs to study cultural value orientations may prove to be a potential alternative in the field of intercultural communication in the future.

Third, this paper displayed an important issue raised by Shuter (1987) for the study of intercultural communiation. According to Shuter, the present intercultural communication research contains very few region and culture specific studies. In other words, the present intercultural communication research pays too much attention to communication process and ignores the

concept of culture itself. It is urgent for intercultural communication scholars to demonstrate the specific ways culture influences communication in different societies. This paper was thought to be focused on this perspective.

Fourth, when studying cultural value orientations, one should understand several inherent limitations. For example, according to Condon and Yousef (1975), the sets of cultural value orientations are neither definitive nor exhaustive. Further refinement may be desirable when applying to specific communication among people from different cultures. In addition, variations of cultural value orientations exist in every culture. A list of cultural value orientations can only be used to describe those of the majority in a culture. For instance, the value orientations of American family discussed in this study only intend to illustrate the middle-class level.

Fifth, cultural value orientations change over time. Although the change is usually very slow, it is necessary to notice the process and direction when studying cultural value orientations. For example, the value orientations of Chinese family discussed in this study were more traditionally oriented. It will be interesting to investigate how these value orientations change in modern China.

Finally, for future reseach, one should extend the study to include other categories such as self, society, human nature, nature and the supernatural. One may also examine how these cultural values orientations change and affect communication

in acculturation process when people sojourn or immigrate to another country. Furthermore, future research may investigate how cultural value orientations affect communication variables such as negotiation, leadership and decision making in organizational setting.

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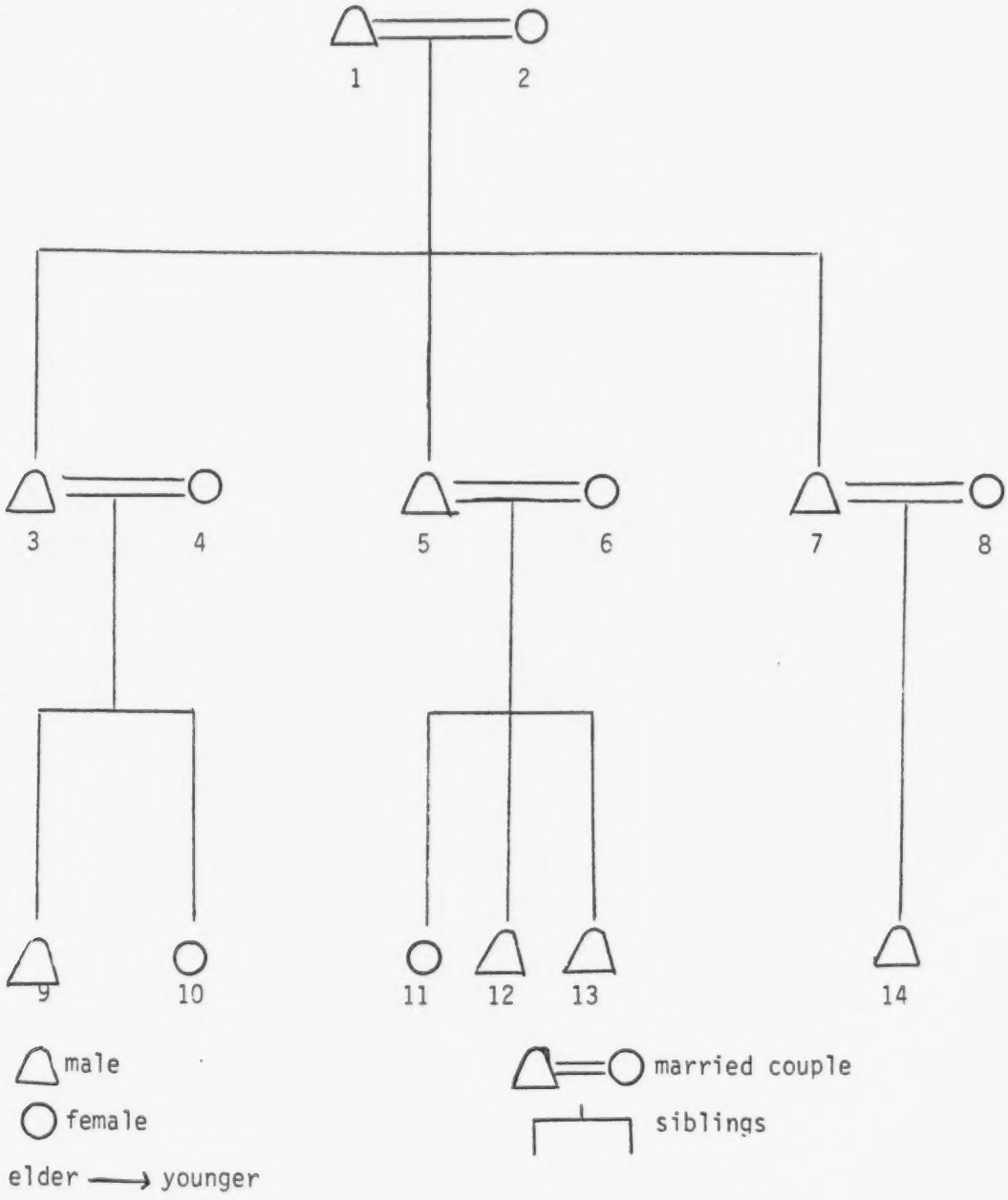

Figure 1. The positional role structure of the Chinese family.

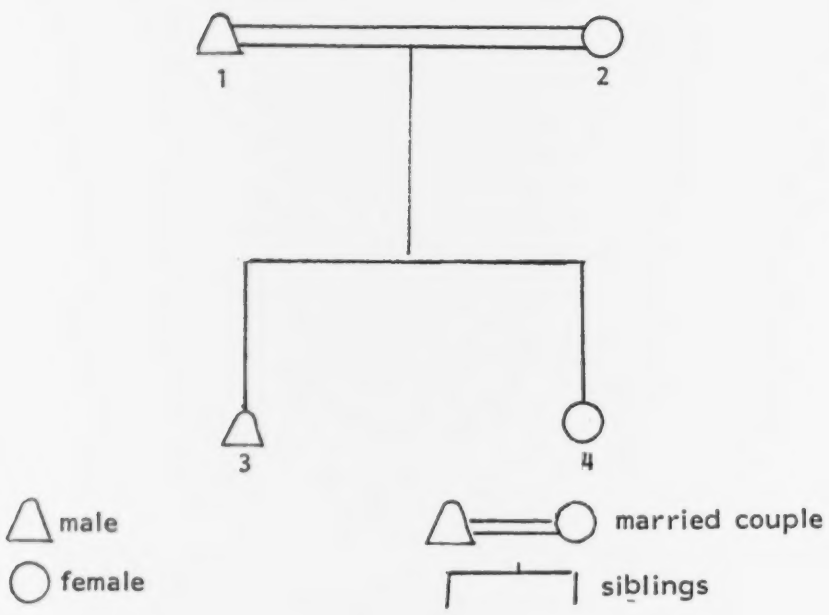

Figure 2. The positional role structure of the American family.

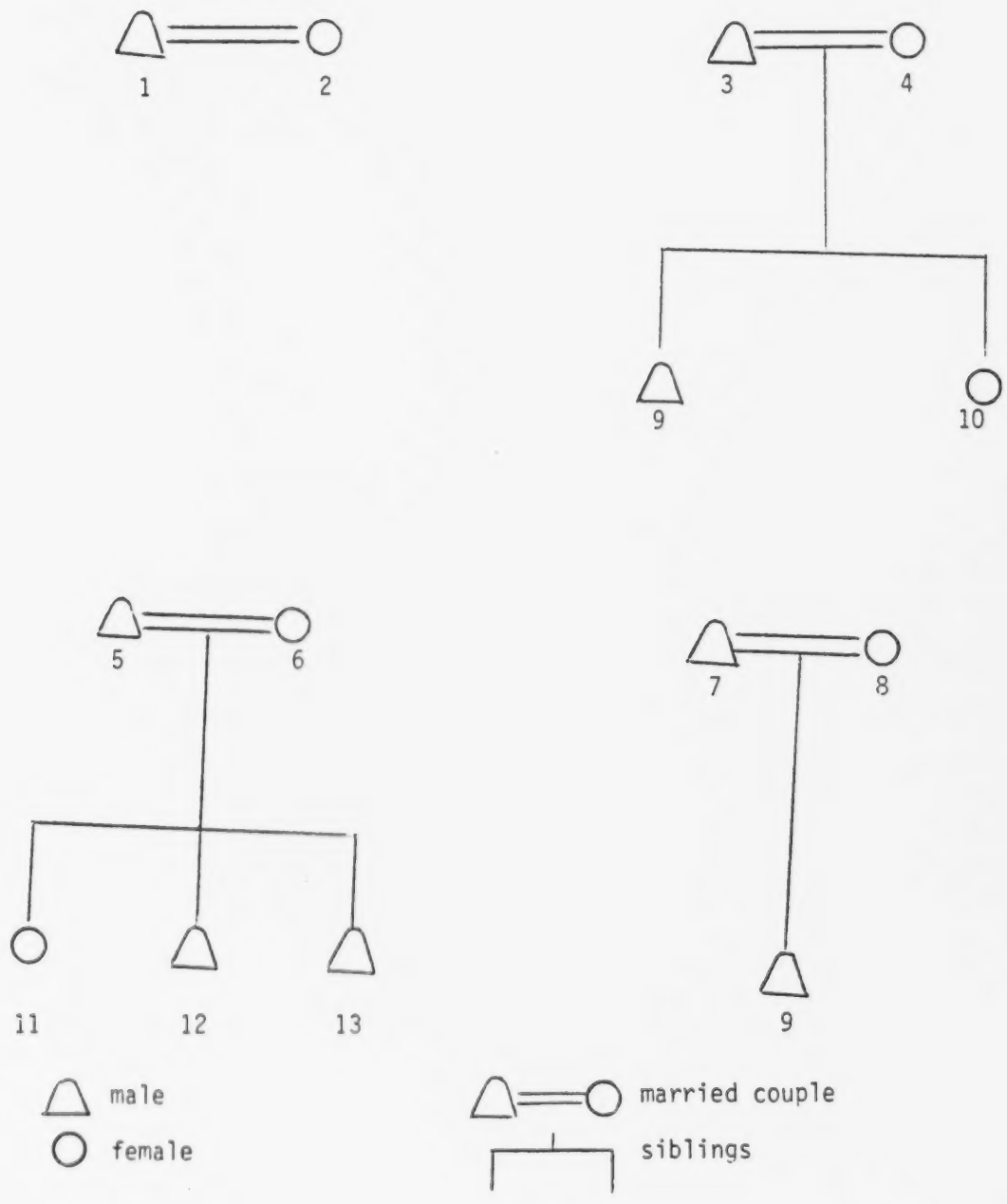

Figure 3. The family becomes four separate conjugal families by the transfer of authority.

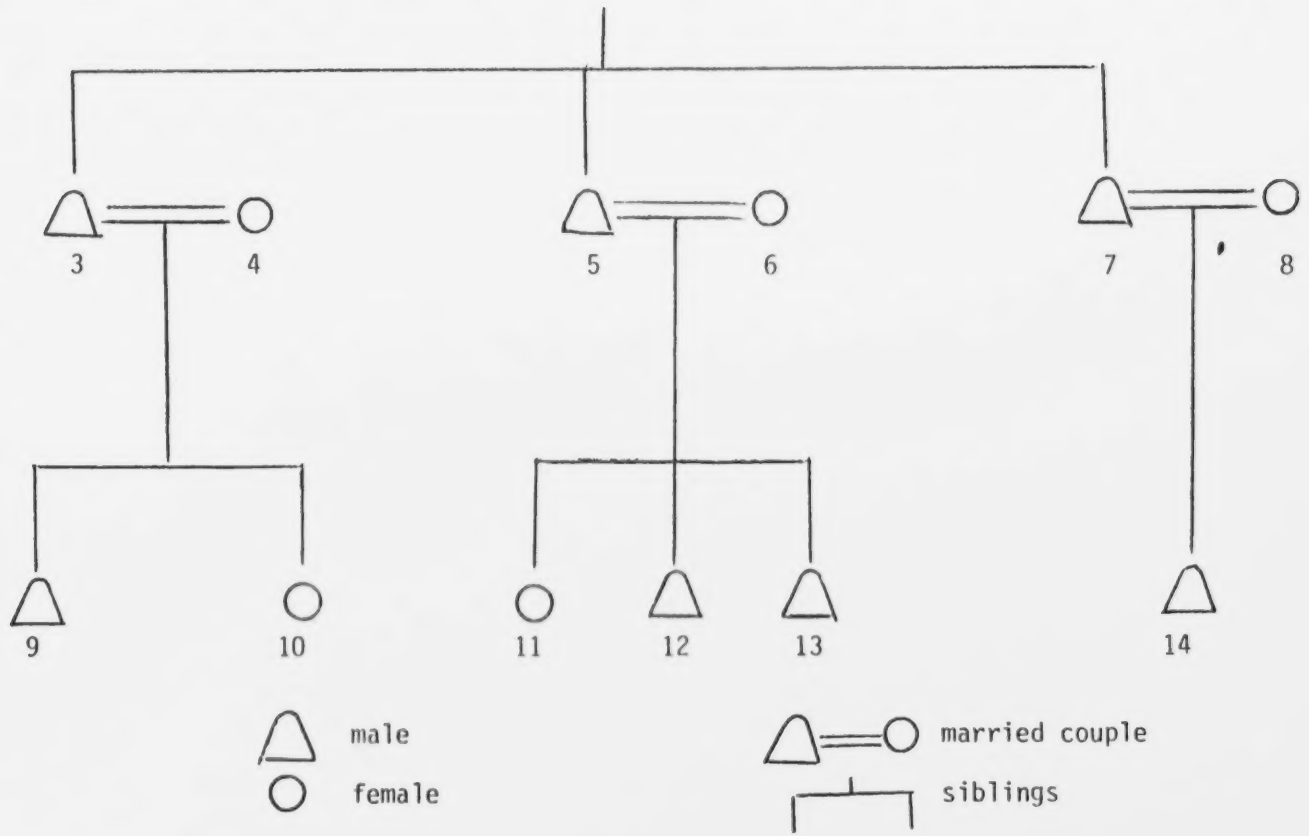

Figure 4. Three conjugal family units live under the same roof.

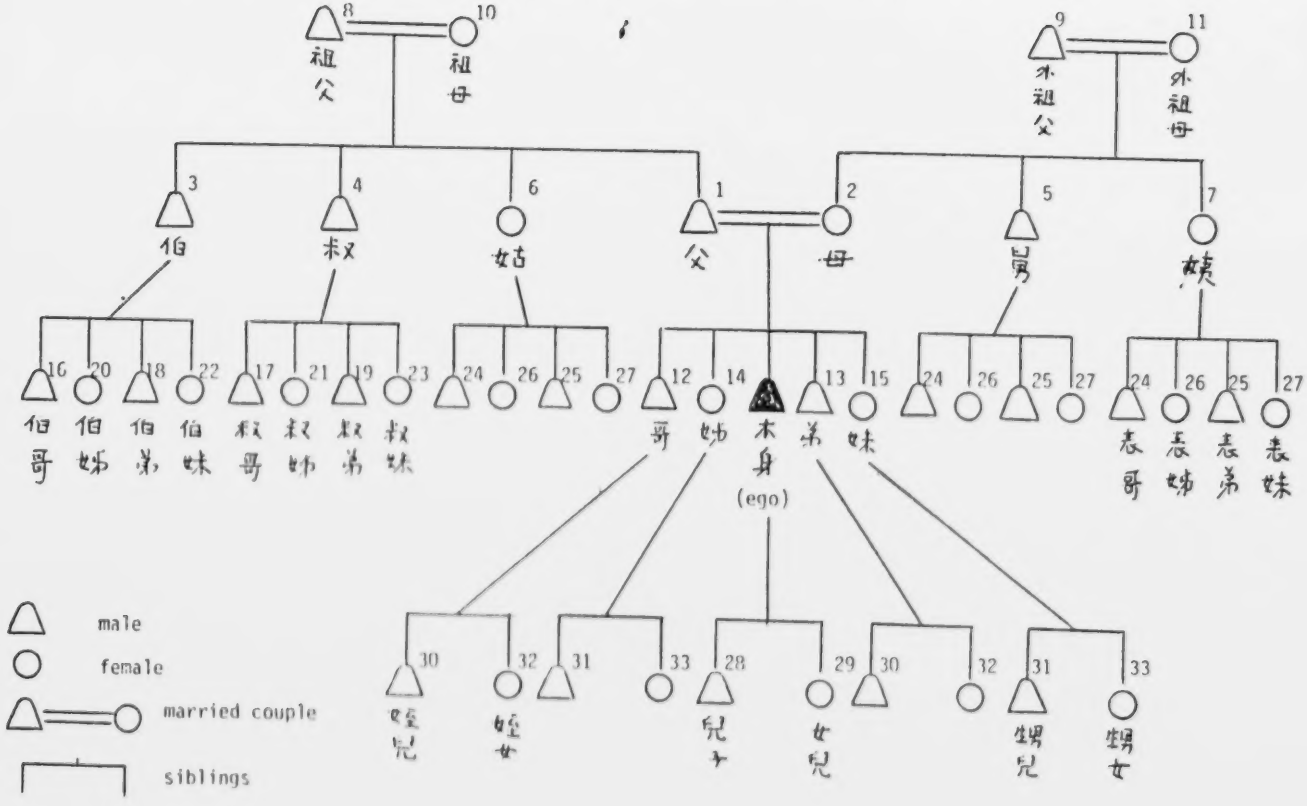

Figure 5. The kinship system of the Chinese family.

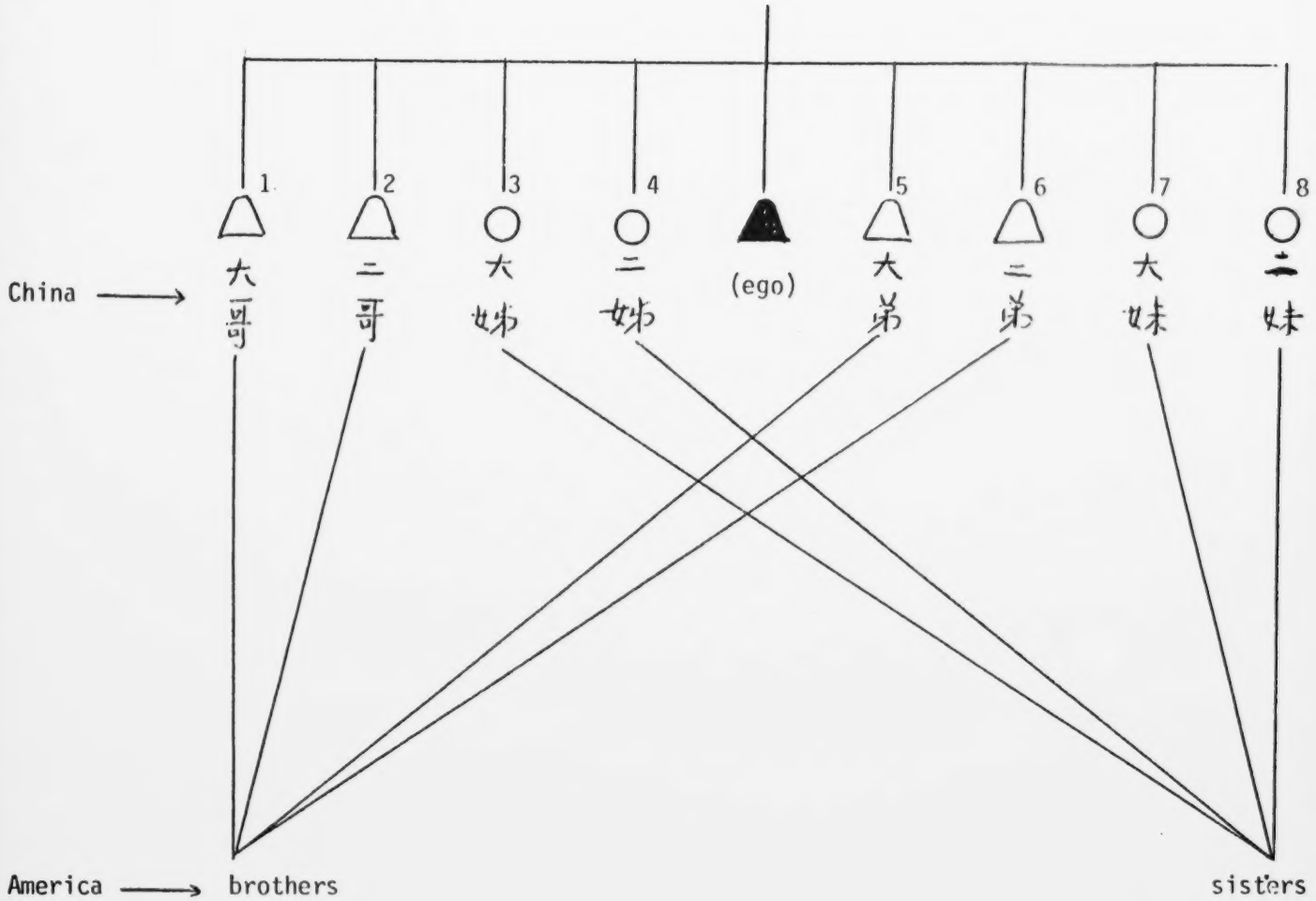

Figure 6. The language orientation for the structure of kinship system between Chinese and American families.

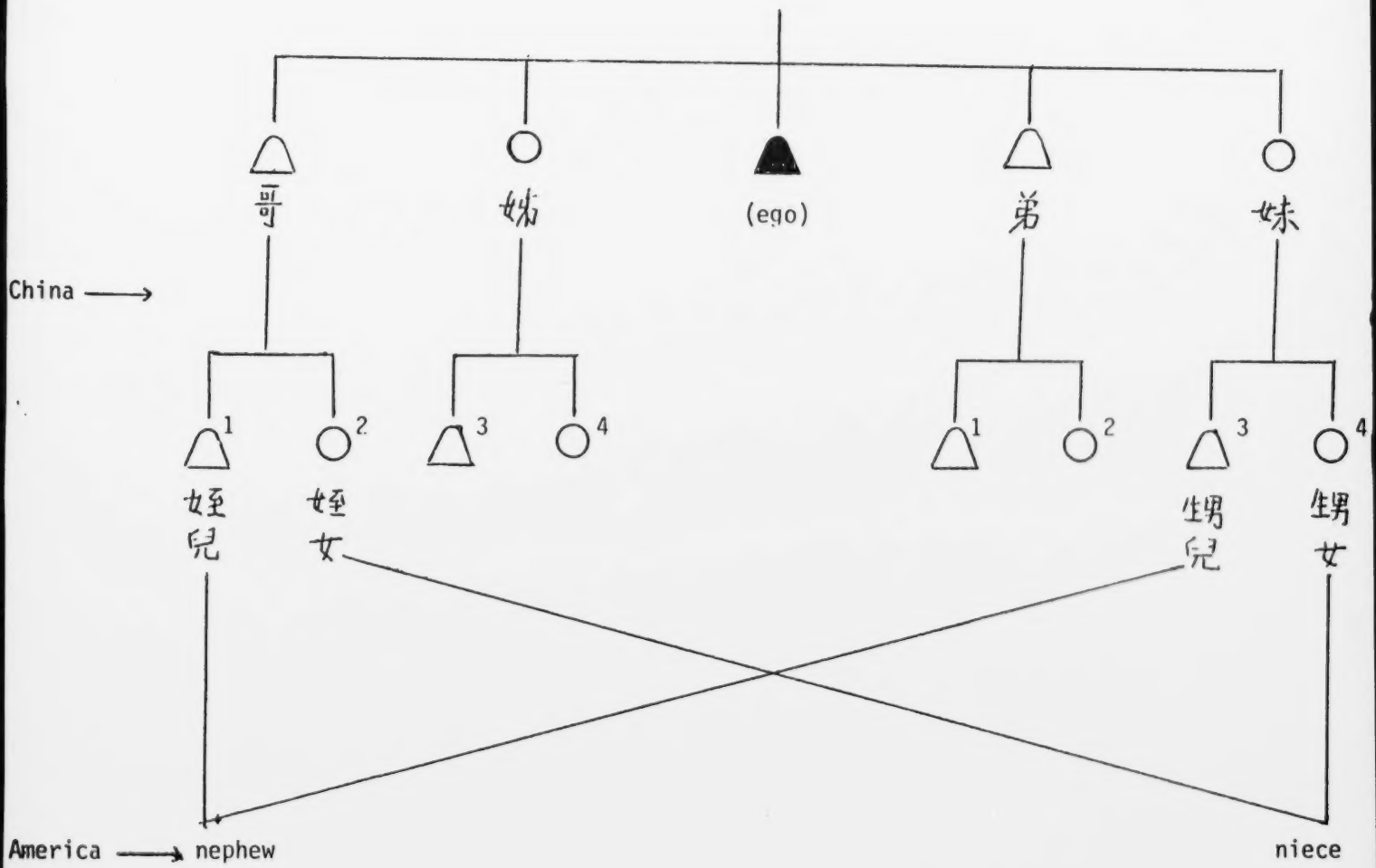

Figure 7. The language orientation for the structure of kinship system between Chinese and American families.

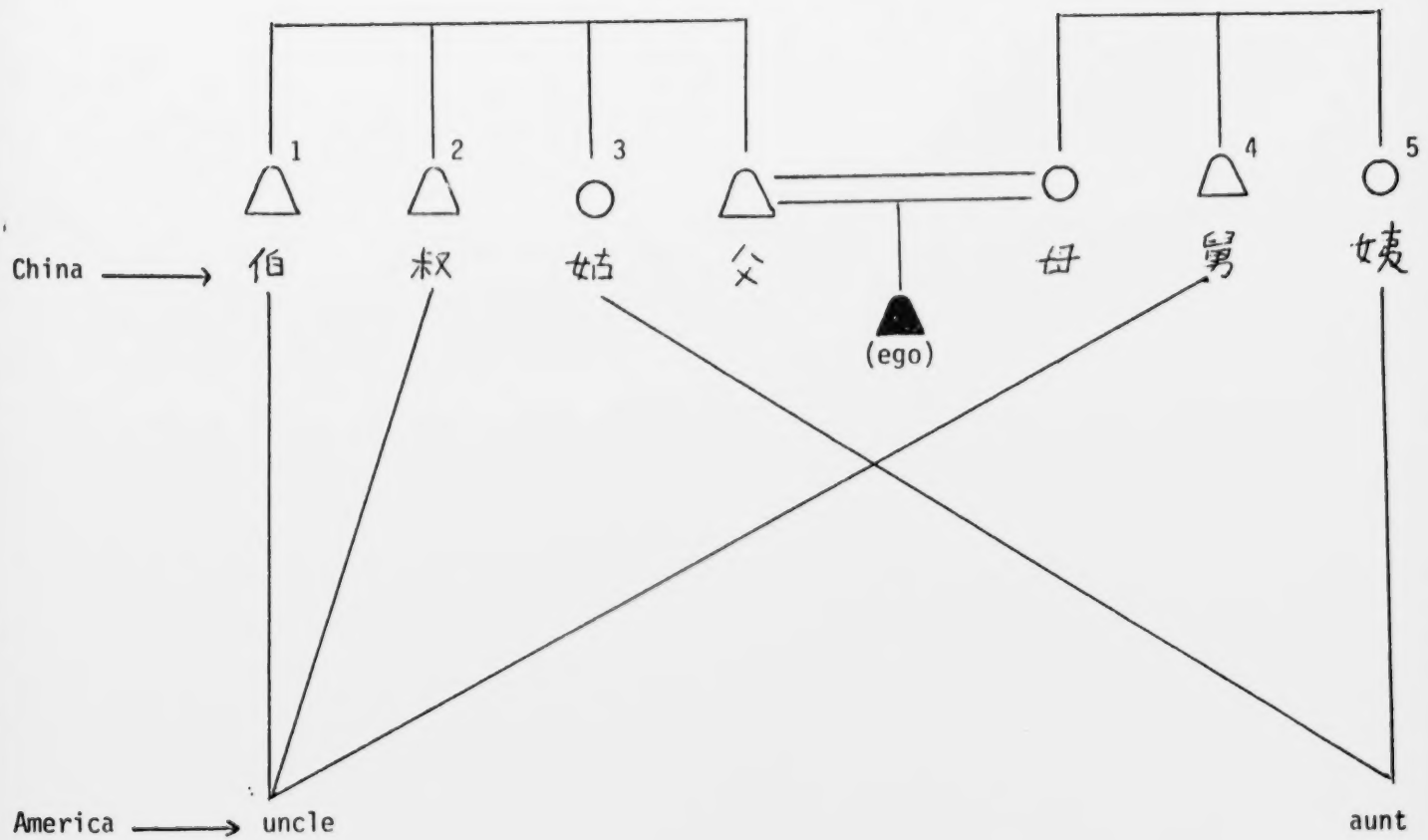

Figure 8. The language orientation for the structure of kinship system between Chinese and American families.